

Application/Control Number: 09/429,758

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claims pto

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1. (Currently amended) A software system for efficient procurement of operating resources within an enterprise, comprising:



requisition record generating means for generating a requisition record for a requisition, the requisition record indicating at least an operating resource that a requester desires to purchase, and an electronic receipt generating means for generating an electronic receipt to acknowledge receipt of the operating resource, wherein the electronic receipt to ~~electronically-indicate~~ indicates one of an acceptance or rejection of a received operating resource and ~~facilitate~~ facilitates a payment for the accepted operating resource upon acceptance, the requisition record generating means generating the requisition record responsive to a combination of:

input by a requestor including a commentary entry describing a purpose for indicating the operating resource to the requisition record; and

operating resource information in an operating resource information database;

approval path determining means, responsive to the requisition record to approval rules in an approval rules database, for determining an approval path for the requisition record, among various ones of a plurality of possible approvers, required to approve the requisition record based on the commentary entry; and

approval path handling means for guiding the requisition record along the determined approval path, wherein the approval path handling means generates a global approval indication based on the commentary entry and in response to the requisition record successfully traversing the approval path; and

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2. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, ~~and further comprising:~~
~~order generating wherein the order generating further comprises~~ means for generating an order record to a supplier of the desired operating resource and for communicating the order to the supplier.
3. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the requisition record includes an indication of the supplier.
4. (Previously presented) The system of claim 2, wherein the order generating means includes means for determining a method of communicating the order to the supplier.
5. (Previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path determining means determines the approval path for the requisition record at least in part in response to a purchase amount field in the requisition record.
6. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating means includes means for retrieving information about the requestor from a personal profile database associated with the requestor.

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7. (Original) The system of claim 6, wherein the information retrieved from the personal profile includes address information representing a destination to which it is desired for the operating resource to be sent and a department in which the requestor works.
8. (Original) The system of claim 6, and further including means for the requestor to override the information about the requestor retrieved from the personal profile database associated with the requestor.
9. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating means includes means for assigning a unique identifier to the requisition.
10. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating means includes means for receiving a unique identifier assigned to the requisition by the user via a user input means.
11. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating means includes:
means for receiving an indication of a hold time from the user via a user input means, wherein the approval path handling means begins to guide the requisition along the approval path upon occurrence of the hold time.
12. (Previously presented) The system of claim 1, and further including:

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means for submitting a requisition in response to the global approval indication,
wherein the requisition record generating means includes:

means for receiving an indication of a hold time from the user via a user input
means, wherein the requisition submitting means submits the requisition only upon
occurrence of the hold time.

13. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating
means includes:

means for receiving input from the requestor specifying a currency unit, and
means for reporting a purchase amount for the operating resource in units of the
specified currency unit.

14. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 1, and further
comprising:

adaptor means for retrieving data from a legacy database program wherein the
requisition record generating means completes fields of the requisition record using the data
retrieved from the legacy database program.

15. (Original) The software system of claim 14, wherein the adaptor means includes
a directory service adaptor for interfacing to a directory service of the enterprise.

16. (Original) The software system of claim 15, wherein the adaptor means is a
human resource management system adaptor for interfacing to a human resource
management system of the enterprise.

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17. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 16, wherein the adaptor means includes means for interacting to the legacy database program at specified time intervals.
18. (Original) The software system of claim 14, wherein the adaptor means includes means, responsive to the global approval indication, for transferring the requisition to an ERP system of the enterprise.
19. (Original) The software system of claim 18, wherein the adaptor means further includes means for retrieving, from the ERP system of the enterprise, a purchase order number corresponding to the requisition.
20. (Original) The software system of claim 18, wherein the adaptor means further includes means for retrieving supplier information from the ERP system of the enterprise.
21. (Original) The software system of claim 20, and further comprising:
means for creating a supplier profile based on the supplier information retrieved from the ERP system of the enterprise.
22. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 1, wherein:
the approval rules each include a predicate and a consequence;
the approval path determining means determines whether a particular one of the approval rules applies by applying the predicate to at least one field of the requisition record;
and

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when the approval path determining means determines that a particular one of the approval rules applies, the approval path determining means determines the approval path with respect to that approval rule by applying the consequence of the approval rule.

23. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 1, wherein:
the approval rules database includes an order definition of which approvers approve the requisition serially and which approvers approve the requisition in parallel; and
the approval path handling means operates responsive to the order definition.

24. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path handling means includes:
notification means, responsive to a position of the requisition record along the approval path, for notifying whichever approver is at that position that action is required to be taken on the requisition.

25. (Original) The software system of claim 24, wherein the approval path handling means includes:
status change recognition means that recognizes a change in status of the requisition as a result of action taken by an approver, and
notification means, wherein the notification means operates responsive to the status change recognition means to notify the requestor of the status change.

26. (Original) The software system of claim 1, wherein:
the action taken by the approver at a particular position in the approval path includes one of:

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approving the requisition; and

denying the requisition; and

the approval path handling means moves the requisition to a next position in the approval path responsive to the approver at the particular position approving the requisition.

27. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 26, wherein:

the approval path handling means includes non-response handling means, responsive to an amount of time during which the requisition is at a particular position in the approval path without any action being taken by the approver at that position, for moving the requisition to another approver who has a relationship with the approver who took no action.

28. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 27, wherein:

the relationship is indicated by chain of command data defined in an ERP database, and the system further includes an ERP adaptor for accessing the chain of command data from the ERP database.

29. (Original) The system of claim 26, and further comprising:

notification means, wherein in response to the requisition being moved to the next position in the approval path, the notification means notifies the approver at said next position that action is required to be taken, by that approver, on the requisition.

30. (Previously presented) The software system of claim 26, wherein:

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the action taken by the approver at the particular location in the approval path further includes:

modifying at least a portion of the requisition record; and

the approval path handling means includes modification response means, operating in response to an approver modifying a requisition, for causing the approval path determining means to determine a replacement approval path, responsive to the modified requisition.

31. (Previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path handling means includes non-response handling means, responsive to a request from the requestor, for moving the requisition from a first approver who has taken no action to a second approver who has a relationship to the approver who took no action.

32. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein, responsive to moving the request from the first approver, the approval path handling means prevents the first approver from action on the requisition.

33. (Previously presented) The system of claim 31, wherein the relationship is at least defined in the approval rules.

34. (Original) The system of claim 1, and further including:
delegation of authority means for receiving a request from a first approver for delegating the authority of the first approver to a second approver by configuring the approval path handling means to modify the approval path such that the approval path includes the second approver in place of the first approver.

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35. (New) A machine-readable medium having a set of executable instructions to cause a machine to perform a method for facilitating electronic commerce, the method comprising:
querying a user about a purchasing decision via a user interface, wherein the user is to reply to the query by selecting one or more requisition information selections from a user interface;
receiving the selected requisition information;
presenting additional requisition information selections to be selected via the user interface based on the previously selected requisition information until a termination criteria has been met; and
generating automatically an electronic requisition form based on the selected requisition information, the selected requisition information to include a item description of an item being offered by at least one of a plurality of suppliers.

36. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein the selected ~~requisition information includes favorite frequently ordered items.~~

37. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein the user interface is a web-browser.

38. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein the presenting additional information includes presenting specific accounting information based on the supplier associated with the item selected.

39. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein the selected requisition information includes shipping information.

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40. (Currently amended) A machine-readable medium having a set of executable instructions to cause a machine to perform a method for facilitating electronic commerce, the method comprising:

querying a user with a plurality of purchasing decision questions via a user interface on a client device, wherein the user is to reply to each question by selecting one or more requisition information selections via the user interface, wherein each question is depended upon a preceding question;

generating automatically an electronic requisition form based on the selected requisition information, the electronic requisition form ~~to be electronically~~ is delivered to at least one of a plurality of suppliers, the electronic requisition form to include a plurality of line items, each line item describing an item to be ordered;

deciding between at least one of a purchase card module, a direct order module, and a purchase order module to submit the electronic requisition form for fulfillment;

transmitting the electronic requisition form directly to at least one of the plurality of suppliers based on a direct order agreement between a company employing the user and the at least one supplier;

generating an electronic receipt at the client device to electronically indicate an acceptance of at least one of the ordered items;

and

facilitating payment for the at least one accepted ordered item by the company based on the electronic receipt.

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41. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, further comprising:

presenting additional requisition information selections to be selected by the user via the user interface based on the previously selected requisition information.

42. (Currently amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, wherein the electronic receipt ~~includes~~ further indicates a rejection of at least one of the ordered items.

43. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, wherein the selected requisition information includes frequently-ordered items.

44. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, wherein the selected requisition information includes shipping information.

45. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, wherein the transmitting includes transmitting the electronic requisition form directly to the least one of the plurality of suppliers based on a supplier profile stored on the client device.

46. (Currently amended) A machine-readable medium having a set of executable instructions to cause a machine to perform a method for facilitating electronic commerce, the method comprising:

generating an electronic requisition form to be electronically delivered to at least one of a plurality of suppliers, the electronic requisition form to include a plurality of line items, each line items describing a item to be ordered;

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deciding between at least one of a purchase card module, a direct order module, and a purchase order module to submit the electronic requisition form for fulfillment;

transmitting the electronic requisition form directly to at least one of the plurality of suppliers; and

generating an electronic receipt to electronically indicate a rejection to at least one of the plurality of line items, the electronic receipt to include a comment field to describe the nature of the rejection.

47. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 46, wherein the electronic receipt further indicates a rejection of all the ordered items.

48. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 46 further comprising:

notifying a purchasing agent for the company of the at least one rejected ordered item.

49. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 46, wherein the electronic receipt further indicates an acceptance of at least one ordered item.

50. (Previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 49 further comprising:

facilitating payment for the at least one accepted ordered item.